

\* Remembering of claims

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PS Ref. No.: IBMK10079

### IN THE CLAIMS:

The claims are as follows:

1. (Previously Presented) A method of operating a reservation control system for reserving items dispensed by vending machines networked to the reservation control system, comprising:

receiving, from a requesting computer, a reservation request for an item;

determining whether the item is available at a vending machine;

*upon determining* if the item is available, reserving the item to ensure availability of the item at the vending machine in satisfaction of the reservation request, wherein reserving the item comprises placing a hold on the item at the vending machine to prevent the item from being purchased by any person other than a person for whom the reservation request is made; and

receiving an authorized request at the vending machine to dispense the item reserved for the person for whom the reservation request was made; and

in response to receiving the request to dispense the item, calculating a service charge for the item according to a length of time for which the item was reserved.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising, if the item is available, transmitting a message indicating that the reservation request has been accepted, whereby the item is reserved for a future pickup.

3. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the reservation control system is a receiving vending machine.

4. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the requesting computer is a requesting vending machine.

5. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein receiving a reservation request comprises receiving an item identifier and an item location identifier.

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6. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the reservation request is received from a wireless telephone.
7. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the vending machine is connected to a network of vending machines.
8. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein determining whether the item is available at the vending machine comprises accessing a product data structure containing a value indicative of a number of the item available at the vending machine, wherein the data structure is periodically updated with information received from the vending machine.
9. (Canceled)
- 9 ~~10~~ (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising, upon determining that the item has been purchased from the vending machine, removing an associated reservation request record from a reservation data structure.
11. (Canceled)
- 10 ~~12~~ (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein reserving the item the item comprises assigning a confirmation number to the reservation request, wherein the confirmation number is used to retrieve the item from the vending machine at future time.
- 11 ~~13~~ (Original) The method of claim <sup>10</sup>~~12~~, further comprising, if the item is available, transmitting to the requesting computer a message containing the confirmation number.
- 12 ~~14~~ (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein reserving the item the item comprises storing an item identifier and a vending machine location identifier and assigning a confirmation number to the reservation request.
- 13 ~~15~~ (Original) The method of claim <sup>12</sup>~~14~~, further comprising, if the item is available, transmitting a message containing the confirmation number.

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~~1418~~ (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising receiving an electronic input indicative of a selection to retrieve the item at the vending machine.

17-19. (Canceled)

~~1520~~ (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
charging the service charge to a purchaser of the item.

~~1621~~ (Original): The method of claim <sup>15</sup>~~20~~, wherein the service charge increases with an increasing reservation time.

22-24. (Canceled)

~~1725~~ (Previously Presented) A reservation system for reserving items dispensed by vending machines, comprising:

a memory containing a reservation program;

a first network interface to support a first network connection with a client computer issuing a reservation request for a vending machine item;

a second network interface to support a second network connection with at least one vending machine; and

a processor which, when configured by the reservation program:

determines an availability of the vending machine item at the at least one vending machine;

*upon determining* if the vending machine item is available, reserves the item to ensure availability of the item in satisfaction of the reservation request, wherein reserving the item comprises placing a hold on the item to prevent the item from being purchased by any person other than a person for whom the reservation request is made; and

upon receiving an authorized request at the vending machine to dispense the item reserved for the person for whom the reservation request was made, calculates a service charge for the item according to a length of time for which the item was reserved.

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18 ~~26~~<sup>17</sup> (Original) The reservation system of claim ~~25~~<sup>17</sup>, wherein the first network interface and the second network interface are the same.

19 ~~27~~<sup>17</sup> (Original) The reservation system of claim ~~25~~<sup>17</sup>, wherein the processor is further configured to issue a confirmation number to the client computer if the item is available.

20 ~~28~~<sup>17</sup> (Original) The reservation system of claim ~~25~~<sup>17</sup>, wherein the processor determines the availability of the vending machine item by accessing a reservation data structure contained in the memory and wherein the reservation data structure is periodically updated with information received from the vending machine.

21 ~~29~~<sup>17</sup> (Original) The reservation system of claim ~~25~~<sup>17</sup>, wherein the reservation system is a vending machine.

30-41. (Canceled)

22 ~~42~~ (Previously Presented) A method of operating a reservation control system for reserving items dispensed by vending machines networked to the reservation control system, comprising:

receiving, from a requesting computer, a reservation request for an item;

determining whether the item is available at a first vending machine;

*upon determining* if the item is available at the first vending machine, reserving the item to ensure availability of the item in satisfaction of the reservation request, wherein reserving the item comprises placing a hold on the item to prevent the item from being purchased by any person other than a person for whom the reservation request is made;

receiving a request input to a second vending machine to dispense the item, wherein the second vending machine is different from the first vending machine; and

*upon determining* if the item is available at the second vending machine:

calculating a service charge for the item according to a length of time for which the item was reserved;

charging the calculated service charge to a purchaser of the item; and

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issuing an instruction to dispense the item from the second vending machine and updating a data structure to indicate that the item has been dispensed.

23 ~~43~~. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
calculating a maximum hold duration for which the item will be reserved, and  
after which the reservation of the item expires; and  
upon detecting expiration of the maximum hold duration, charging a penalty fee to the person for whom the reservation request was made if the item had not yet been retrieved when the maximum hold duration expires.

24 ~~44~~. (Previously Presented) The method of claim <sup>22</sup>~~42~~, further comprising:  
calculating a maximum hold duration for which the item will be reserved, and  
after which the reservation of the item expires; and  
upon detecting expiration of the maximum hold duration, charging a penalty fee to the person for whom the reservation request was made if the item had not yet been retrieved when the maximum hold duration expires.

25 ~~45~~. (Previously Presented) A reservation system for reserving items dispensed by vending machines, comprising:  
a memory containing a reservation program;  
a first network interface to support a first network connection with a client computer issuing a reservation request for a vending machine item;  
a second network interface to support a second network connection with at least one vending machine; and  
a processor which, when configured by the reservation program performs processing, comprising:

upon receiving the reservation request, determining an availability of the vending machine item at the at least one vending machine;

*upon determining if* the vending machine item is available, reserving the item to ensure availability of the item in satisfaction of the reservation request, wherein reserving the item comprises placing a hold on the item to prevent the item from being

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purchased by any person other than a person for whom the reservation request is made;

calculating a maximum hold duration for which the item will be reserved, and after which the reservation of the item expires; and

upon detecting expiration of the maximum hold duration, charging a penalty fee to the person for whom the reservation request was made if the item had not yet been retrieved when the maximum hold duration expires.

*26* ~~46~~. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim <sup>*25*</sup>~~45~~, further comprising upon receiving an authorized request at the vending machine to dispense the item reserved for the person for whom the reservation request was made, calculating, by the processor, a service charge for the item according to a length of time for which the item was reserved.